

## PART II

## Population

Where Washington's People Live

Because of the influences of topography, climate, accessibility and recent industrialization, Washington's population is distributed unevenly throughout the state. Over two-thirds of the people live in the western portion, concentrated largely in the industrial cities of Puget Sound. The Olympic Mountains and Willapa Hills of the Coast Range and the Cascade Mountains stand out as sparsely populated areas in western Washington. The Willamette-Puget Sound Lowland, extending from Vancouver on the Columbia River northward to Bellingham near the Canadian border, is the major population belt of the state. It contains a fairly well-distributed rural population on its river deltas and rolling glacial drift plains.

The mountains, hills, plateaus, irrigable valleys and dry climatic conditions cause a generally clustered pattern of population settlement in eastern Washington. Mountainous areas including the eastern Cascade Mountain slope, the Okanogan Highlands, the Blue Mountains, and the Selkirks have but few people. Dryland and upland areas which cannot be irrigated, such as large portions of the Waterville Plateau, the Channelled Scablands and the hills of Yakima County, are thinly settled. Both rural and urban population is concentrated in the irrigated Yakima, Kittitas, Wenatchee, Okanogan and Walla Walla Valleys and in the Pasco and Quincy Basins. In the far eastern section--the Palouse Hills--the uniform soil, topography and moderate rainfall permits a more evenly distributed population. The industrialized Spokane metropolitan area and the rich agricultural Yakima Valley are the major population clusters of eastern Washington.

Growth of Population

Washington was explored by Spanish, Russian, British and American expeditions between 1592 and 1805, but no settlement occurred until 1810. Ownership of the area was disputed by America and Great Britain. A compromise, the Joint Occupancy Treaty of 1818, permitted both American and British fur traders and settlers to live north of the Columbia River. British interests (the Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay Company) established fur trading posts at Spokane and Walla Walla in 1810 and 1818. American claims were strengthened by the Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804-1805) and by the settlements at Fort Spokane, Okanogan, and Astoria by the Pacific Fur Company. The British increased their influence as they established agricultural settlements at Fort Vancouver and Fort Misqually between 1824 and 1833. Settlement by Americans north of the Columbia, although permitted by treaty, was discouraged by the Hudson's Bay Company which desired to maintain its fur trade monopoly.

A growing tide of American land settlers over the Oregon Trail during the 1840's changed the balance of control in favor of the United States. Most of the Americans settled in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. Unhindered by the British, several hundred American settlers moved northward across the Columbia into the Puget Sound country and soon outnumbered the British fur traders.

The conflict of interests was solved by the Oregon Treaty of 1846, which gave the United States the present area of Washington and established the Canadian boundary as it exists today. Oregon Territory (including all of the present state of Washington) was created in 1848 by Congress, with its capitol in Salem, Oregon. Settlers north of the Columbia met in 1851 at the Monticello Convention in present Longview, Washington, and asked for a separate territorial government. Washington Territory was created March 2, 1851, with a capitol at Olympia on Puget Sound. Isaac I. Stevens was appointed as Governor.

Population growth was slow before 1860. Lack of roads, the long distance from the East, and the difficulty of clearing the dense forests of the Puget Sound country kept immigration to a minimum. Indian hostility prevented settlement in most of eastern Washington prior to 1858, and that tended to slow movement into the Puget Sound Basin. The Washington population was only 11,594 according to the 1860 Census.

In 1863, the Washington territorial boundaries were changed to the present state lines by the creation of Idaho Territory. The Census of 1870 was the first to follow the present boundaries, and it enumerated a population of 23,995.

Population grew rapidly from 1870 to 1890. New transcontinental railroads brought large waves of immigrants from the East and Europe. The completion of the Union Pacific to the Columbia River brought new settlers into southeastern Washington. When the Northern Pacific reached Spokane in 1880 and was continued on toward Puget Sound, settlers occupied the Palouse and Big Bend wheat lands and the Yakima Valley. In 1883, six new counties were created in eastern Washington. Expansion of coastwise shipping and lumbering built up the cities on Puget Sound and at Grays Harbor. Washington Territory was admitted to the Union as a state in 1889. The population at that time was 350,000.

The period 1900-1910 was a decade of rapid growth in which the state gained 624,000 persons, more than doubling to 1,141,990. Two other railroads, Great Northern and Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul, reached Puget Sound in 1893 and 1909, respectively. The lumber industry and agriculture supported more people; land and timber seekers homesteaded free public domain lands in the mountainous areas. The Alaskan gold rush doubled Seattle's population within a decade. Railroads and ships brought large numbers of people from Europe, who took up lumbering, fishing, mining, and agriculture. Ranked numerically according to the 1920 Census, the largest foreign-born groups in the state were Canadians (42,000), Swedes (35,000), Norwegians (34,000), English (23,000), Germans (22,000), Italians (18,000), Finns (12,500), Russians (11,000) and Irish (9,000).

Between 1910 and 1940 population grew at a slower but steady rate. The increase was about 20,000 per year. The lumber industry began to decline after 1929. Reduced employment and a growing scarcity of land were reflected in a slower rate of population growth. However, during the 1930's, many farmers from the Great Plains drought areas moved overland to Washington seeking farming opportunities.

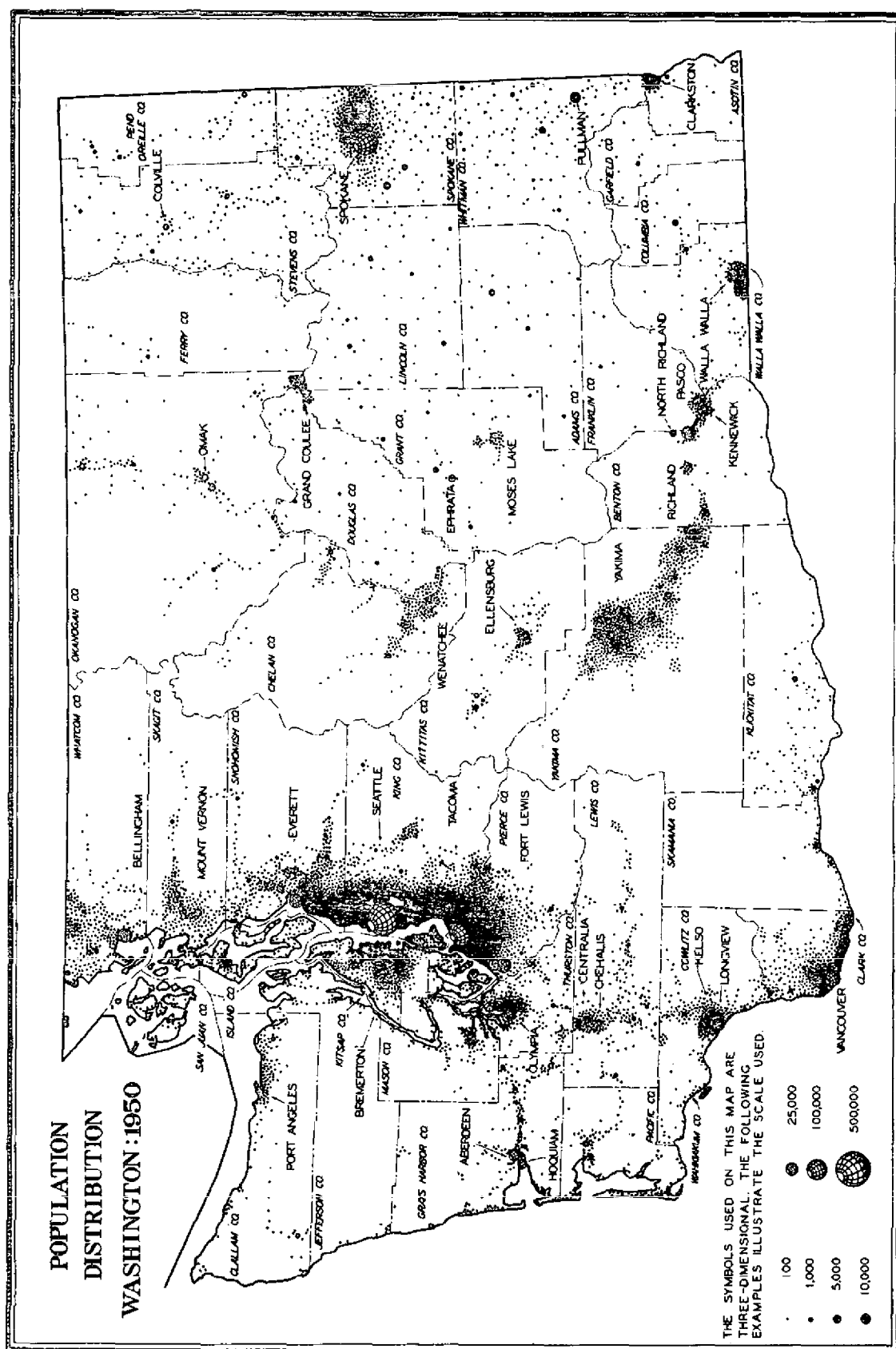
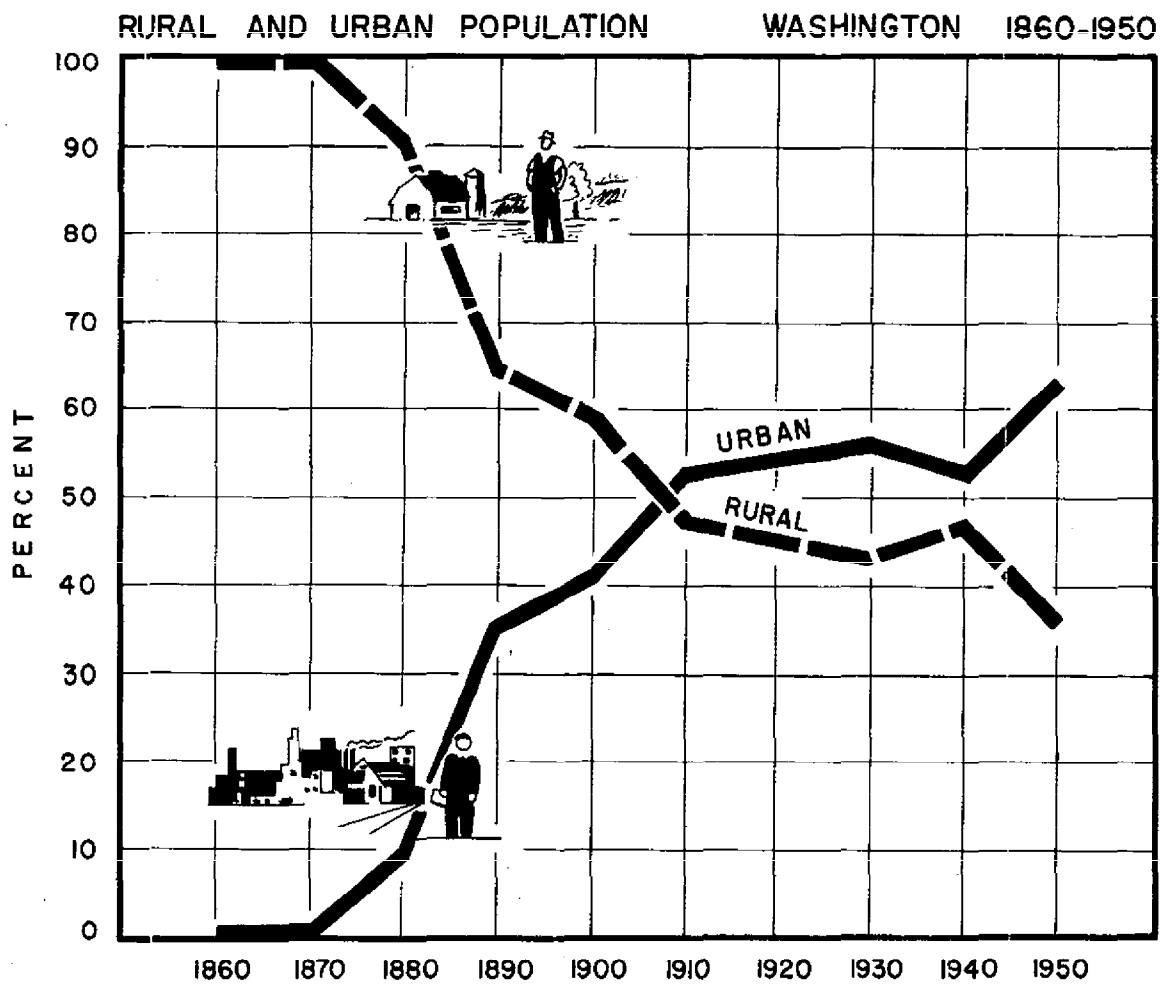
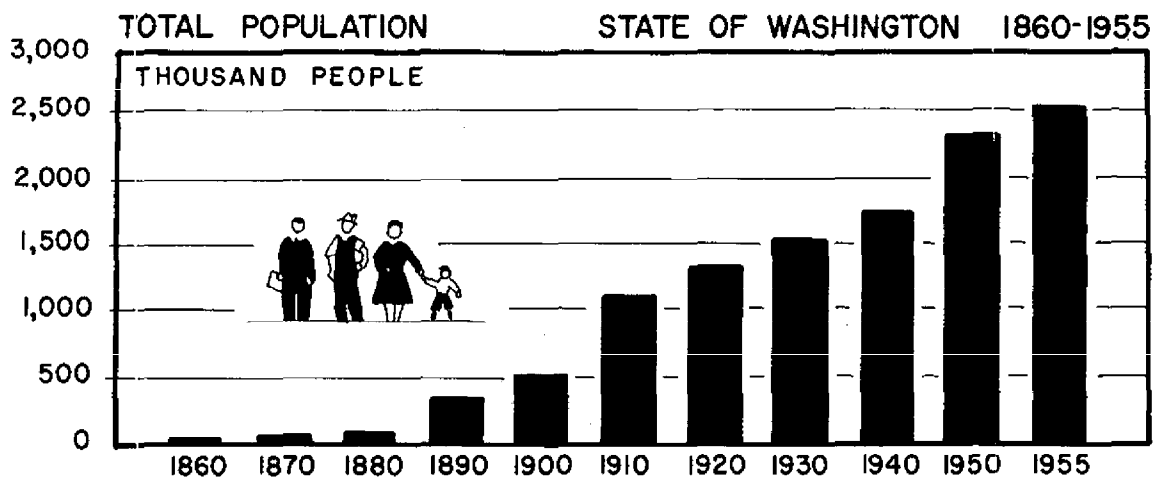


Figure 6.- DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN WASHINGTON, 1950 (Map by courtesy of Population Research Office, Washington State Census Board).



SOURCES OF DATA: U.S. Census 1860-1950; Washington State Census Board, Estimate - 1955.

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The 1940-1950 decade brought the greatest increase in Washington history. Primarily an overland movement of laborers to new defense industries, it resulted in an increase of 642,772 in ten years, raising the state population to 2,378,963 in 1950. Most of the new growth was in the industrial metropolitan districts in King, Pierce, Kitsap, Clark and Spokane Counties and at the Federal atomic works in Benton County.

### Urban and Rural Population

In 1870 the entire population of Washington was living in rural areas--in villages and on farms. By 1900, 211,477 of the population of Washington, or 40.8 percent, were living in urban areas. In 1950, according to the Census definition of "urban" which includes residents of towns of 2,500 and larger, 1,503,166 persons, or 63.2 percent, were living in urban areas. And over 52 percent lived in three standard metropolitan areas comprised of Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane and their surrounding suburban cities and towns. This trend follows the national pattern.

Table 1.- Population of Washington  
1860-1955

Year	Population
1860	11,594
1870	23,955
1880	75,116
1890	357,232
1900	518,103
1910	1,141,990
1920	1,356,621
1930	1,563,396
1940	1,736,191
1950	2,378,963
1955	2,580,000

Sources: U.S. Census, Population;  
Washington State Census  
Board, April 1, 1955  
Estimate.

Bellingham (35,700), Everett (34,100), Bremerton (32,200), Walla Walla (25,400) and Longview (23,500).

The rural population is predominantly rural nonfarm, consisting of 602,026 persons who live in the country, but do not operate farms. The rural farm population decreased about one-fifth between 1940 and 1950, and numbered only 273,771, or 11.5 percent of the state's total 1950 population of 2,378,963. As a result of the farm-to-city trend in Washington, about one person in ten is living on a farm and about six persons out of ten are living in a town or city larger than 2,500.

According to the 1955 estimates of the Washington Census Board, the ten leading cities of Washington ranked as follows: Seattle (555,000), Spokane (182,000), Tacoma (156,000), Yakima (43,000), Vancouver (41,950),

### Population of Clark County

Clark County has grown steadily in population since the first Census in 1860. From 1860 to 1890 the population was entirely rural. With the rapid growth of Vancouver and Camas, the population became over one-half urban in the years 1950-55. A total of 47,950 persons lived within cities of 2,500 and larger in 1955. Another 23,446 persons were classed as rural nonfarm, living in small towns, hamlets and along highways. Only 16 out of each 100 persons in Clark County were living on farms in 1950. The rural-farm population was 14,784--sixth highest in the state.

Table 2.- Population of Clark County  
1860-1955.

Census Year	Population	Percent Rural	Percent Urban
1860	2,384	100	0
1870	3,081	100	0
1880	5,490	100	0
1890	11,709	69.7	30.3
1900	13,419	76.7	23.3
1910	26,115	64.4	35.6
1920	32,805	61.5	38.5
1930	40,316	50.4	49.6
1940	49,852	53.4	46.6
1950	85,307	45.6	54.4
1955 <sup>1/</sup>	85,300	41.7	58.3

<sup>1/</sup> 1955 data are estimated by the Washington State Census Board.

Source: U.S. Census, Population.

With the exception of some interior foothill towns, all the incorporated places of Clark County have grown since 1910. The industrial cities on the Columbia River have been among the most rapidly growing in the state. Vancouver grew from 15,776 in 1930 to 41,950 in 1955 and Camas, a pulp and paper manufacturing city, grew from 4,239 to 5,150 in the same period. Washougal, on the Columbia River, more than doubled its population after 1930. Interior farming area centers, Battleground, La Center and Ridgefield also added to their population. An important factor of growth throughout Clark County has been a

Table 3.- Population of Incorporated Places  
Clark County, 1910-1955.

Incorporated City or Town	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1955 <sup>1/</sup>
Battleground	--	--	--	--	--	820
Camas	1,125	1,843	4,239	4,433	4,725	5,150
La Center	288	167	219	193	204	226
Ridgefield	297	620	607	643	762	850
Vancouver	9,300	12,637	15,766	18,788	41,664	41,950
Washougal	456	765	1,206	1,267	1,577	2,632
Yacolt	435	520	295	297	411	383

<sup>1/</sup> Populations for 1955 are estimates of the Washington State Census Board, April 1, 1955.

Sources: U.S. Census, Population.  
Washington State Census Board.

suburban movement outward from the Portland metropolitan area. Most influential, however, has been the vast increase of industrial employment on all the lower Columbia River during and since World War II.

Clark County has been a melting pot of many foreign immigrants. In 1890 nearly one-fifth of the population was foreign-born. In 1950 as a source of immigrants, Canada, Germany and the Scandinavian countries led all others. Finnish immigration was large in the 1920's and German and Swedish immigration was largest in the 1900 to 1920 period. The percentage of foreign-born white population has decreased as a result of the limited European immigration quotas since 1920. In addition to the nationalities in Table 4, the 1950 Census tabulated 75 American Indians, 28 Japanese, 23 Chinese and 908 Negroes. Nearly all Negroes live in the cities and are employed in industries and service trades.

Table 4.- Foreign-Born White Population, Clark County  
1890, 1920 and 1950

Country of Birth	1890	1920	1950
England and Wales.....	201	326	346
Scotland.....	79	109	97
Northern Ireland.....	-	-	2
Ireland (Eire).....	399	167	82
Norway.....	161	299	284
Sweden.....	156	598	412
Denmark.....	36	180	114
Netherlands.....	7	40	67
Switzerland.....	120	186	-
France.....	20	38	24
Germany.....	475	662	437
Poland.....	3	78	95
Czechoslovakia.....	3	-	42
Austria.....	45	91	72
Yugoslavia.....	-	6	17
Russia (U.S.S.R.).....	111	144	229
Finland.....	-	375	354
Italy.....	3	84	70
Canada-French.....	-	58	53
Canada-Other.....	398	586	1,040
All other countries...	101	335	511
Totals	2,318	4,362	4,348
Percent foreign-born..	19.8	13.3	5.1

Source: U.S. Census, Population

Agriculture ranked fourth in employment in 1950, according to the Census. Manufacturing led with 8,597 employed workers or 30 percent of the 28,955 total employed. There were 2,884 employed or self-employed in agriculture. According to the Census, only 10 percent of all the employment was in agriculture. This is a recent change in the employment characteristics for prior to 1940 agriculture led among the occupations.

Table 5.- Employment of the Population  
Clark County, 1950

Types of Employment	Male Workers	Female Workers	Total Workers	Percent of Workers
<u>Total employed workers</u>	21,473	7,482	28,955	
Agriculture.....	2,519	365	2,884	10.0
Forestry and fisheries.....	85	4	89	.3
Mining.....	51	4	55	.2
Construction.....	2,271	55	2,326	8.0
Manufacturing.....	7,261	1,336	8,597	30.0
Transportation.....	1,540	105	1,645	5.9
Retail and wholesale stores.....	3,082	1,618	4,700	16.2
Miscellaneous services.....	2,712	3,239	5,951	20.6
Public administration (government employment).....	905	278	1,183	4.1
Other employment.....	1,047	478	1,525	5.3

Source: U.S. Census, Population.